



SAM RANGE—TECH FILE PHOTO

Students sit atop a plinth in the corner of Lobby 7 as pedestrians walk past on Nov. 5, 2009. The Class of 1954 is sponsoring a student contest for designs to sit atop the pedestals, which were left unfinished after Lobby 7 was designed in 1939.

Lobby 7 design competition narrows to twelve finalists

Grads, undergrads envision empty plinths' future

By Aparna Sud
STAFF REPORTER

The empty plinths in Lobby 7 are familiar to anyone who passes through the entrance to MIT's campus on a regular basis. Originally designed to hold statues depicting the ancient Greek intellectuals Aristotle, Ictinus, Archimedes, and Callicrates, they are commonly adorned today with a rather unique piece of artwork: MIT students. The Lobby 7 Design Competition, which kicked off last May, aims to fill the empty spaces with more appropriate adornment. After reviewing the 60 student-submitted entries in December, the competition announced its twelve finalists two weeks ago. The competition has separate divisions for undergraduate and graduate student entries, and the finalists were evenly split between these divisions.

According to the competition's website, the evaluating blind jury consists of four MIT faculty members, three local professional architects who are familiar with MIT's campus, and a class of 1954 engineering alumnus. According to Mark M. Jarzombek PhD '86, associate dean of the School of Architecture and Planning and director of the competition, there was a vast array of both individual and group entries. Some designs consisted of traditional statues, while others were interactive or included electrical machinery, and a few even had humorous appeal. All of the entries said something unique about MIT.

The twelve finalist teams and individuals have been given \$400 to further develop their designs for the final round submissions. In early March, the teams will present a project design, model, video, or any combination of

those three media to the panel of judges, which will choose three undergraduate and three graduate winners. First, second, and third prizes at each level will be awarded \$10,000, \$2,500, and \$1,000, respectively.

According to Jennifer Y. Chuong G, a finalist, the competition is very generous and encourages students to feel free to push their limits. Although she acknowledges the limitations of constructing the winning design — it is possible that none of the student designs will ultimately be built — Chuong said that "Lobby 7 is a great space and it would be great to see something there, even temporarily, that is student-initiated."

The concept of the Lobby 7 Design Competition surfaced two years ago, according to Jarzombek,

Lobby 7, Page 12

Weekend incidents rattle Red Line riders

Passenger struck, killed at Central

By Ethan A. Solomon
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Two violent incidents disrupted T service along the Red Line, which serves MIT, over the long weekend. A passenger was stabbed on a Cambridge-bound train on Monday, and on Sunday, a Red Line train struck and killed a man at the Central Square station.

The Boston Globe reported on Sunday that a man was killed by a Red Line train inside the Central Square station shortly before 5:25 p.m. Train service was halted for over two hours, during which time buses provided service between the Harvard and Park Street stations. The nature of the death had not been determined as of yesterday evening.

Yesterday, the Globe also reported that a male teenager was stabbed on a Red Line train bound for Cambridge. Police and emergency medical personnel responded to a stab-

bing report at Park Street station at about 5:15 p.m. A Boston police spokesman told the Globe that the victim was about 18 years old and that he was taken to Massachusetts General Hospital. His injuries are reportedly not life-threatening.

Last November, Omar Khalidi, a librarian at MIT, was killed when he was hit by a Red Line train at the Kendall Square station. Khalidi's wife told The Times of India last year that Khalidi had been suffering from diabetes and insomnia, and that he fainted and fell in front of the train. Khalidi was born and raised in Hyderabad, India.

Also over the weekend, a Chicago Transit Authority Red Line train struck and killed a man in Chicago's South Side, reported the Chicago Sun-Times. The man, 32-year old Theus Beal, was reportedly a sexual assault suspect who had announced he was going to commit suicide some time prior to jumping in front of the train.



JOANNA KAO—THE TECH

The Coca-Cola distributor for the Star Market on Sidney Street gave MIT a shout-out using boxes of Coke products. This is just one of several designs they display throughout the year, including a Christmas tree shape around the winter holidays.

IN SHORT

Classes are on a Monday schedule today! Classes resume normal schedule tomorrow.

Election packets for UA President, Vice President, and all Class Council positions are due this Saturday, Feb. 26, at 12 noon to the UA office, W20-401.

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and Boston University professor Isabel Wilkerson discusses her first

book, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*, today at 7 p.m. in Kirsch Auditorium (32-123).

Applications to move to Maseeh Hall for Fall 2011 are due by 9 a.m. on Monday, Feb. 28. The application is binding, and is available at http://housing.mit.edu/maseeh_hall_application.

Send news information and tips to news@tech.mit.edu.

MIT student assaulted in Boston

According to an MIT Police crime alert bulletin, two female MIT students were approached in Boston by an unknown male early Monday morning. The first student was assaulted at around 3:05 a.m. while walking down Beacon Street in Boston

towards Massachusetts Avenue. The suspect pulled the hood of her jacket after she refused conversation. He attempted to pull her closer by grabbing her stomach, but she escaped to a taxi. The second victim was approached around 3:30 a.m. while sitting with two male companions. The suspect walked up to the group and asked her to come with him. Her companions told the man to leave.

The suspect is described as

a tall, black male, 20-23 years old, with a light-medium complexion, large eyes, a thin build and face, and short hair. The victims said he was wearing a red baseball hat, dark clothing, and a black windbreaker. He was also carrying a backpack.

To contact the MIT Police with tips regarding the incident, call 617-258-8477 (8-TIPS). In emergencies, campus police can be reached at 617-253-1212.

—Pearle Lipinski

THE ILLUSION OF INEQUALITY

Statistics can be deceiving. Is America's growing income disparity really something to worry about? **OPINION, p. 5**

INFINITE CONGESTION

Tips for navigating MIT's crowded corridors. **CAMPUS LIFE, p. 9**

(DIGITAL) FREEDOM IS AT HAND

Arab unrest highlights a new technological dynamic. **OPINION, p. 4**



INSTITUTE DOUBLE TAKE

The Tech features a weekly photo capturing the rare and beautiful at MIT. **CAMPUS LIFE, p. 9**

SOLVING THE SLEEP PROBLEM

Some sleep once a day for a long period of time. Others have discovered a new approach. **FUN, p. 6**

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The inequality illusion

Scratch the surface to find that income disparity isn't all it's hyped up to be

By Keith Yost
STAFF COLUMNIST

Benjamin Disraeli is once said to have remarked that there are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics. As a man who views the world through empiricist lenses, I've never been fond of the saying (I prefer to think of the three categories as lies, damned lies, and personal anecdotes), but there is some truth to the maxim. Statistics, arranged with malice aforethought, can lead their viewers to make facile, incorrect inferences.

Such is the state of our national discussion on household income inequality. We're told that we're witnessing a steady deterioration in the fairness of how we divide of our economic pie. As proof, we are offered the following: In 1967 (the year that the Census Bureau began collecting such information), the lowest quintile of households had 4 percent of the nation's income, and their fellow quintiles had 10.8 percent, 17.3 percent, 24.2 percent, and 43.6 percent, while the very top five percent had 17.2 percent. By 2009, the numbers had changed; the bottom quintile earned 3.4 percent, the other quintiles earned 8.6 percent, 14.6 percent, 23.2 percent, and 50.3 percent, with the top five percent taking home 21.7 percent of the national income.

Many see this as a critical problem, and recommend a variety of radical solutions to combat it. We're told that we need to strengthen unions, set command and control wage floors and ceilings that mandate minimum and maximum wages, wipe out the savings of the wealthy through capital gains taxes or other measures, and so on, to prevent what must be theft from the poor by the rich.

There are a large number of problems with this policy prescription, the foremost of which is that America does not have an

inequality problem.

Let's begin with the obvious: the inequality of well-being has drastically fallen since 1967. Bill Gates may have a million times the income of the average man, but he cannot eat a million meals. Despite the enlarged access to medical care that his income enables, his life expectancy is not

The rise in income inequality has been largely matched by a rise in the inequality of hours worked.

much higher than his fellow American — indeed, demographically, it is *poor* whites who are at the top of the life expectancy charts (second only to Asians). Technology and economic growth have brought most significant technologies within buying reach of the masses; the real mean income of the bottom quintile may have only increased by 28.6 percent to the top quintile's 70.7 over the past 42 years, but the utility that the bottom quintile got from each marginal dollar was much higher. And at issue is not just the fact that rising income has pushed us all further along the curve of diminishing marginal returns, but the inequality of consumption is also much less than the inequality of income — with increasing wealth comes an increasing tendency to give away (either to offspring, charity, or the government) a higher fraction of earned income.

Not only that, but the rich have also faced much higher inflation relative to the poor. Between Wal-Mart and globalization of production, low-end consumer goods have become cheaper at a much faster rate than high-end consumer goods. Adjusted

for purchasing power, the growth disparity in consumption between the classes becomes miniscule.

Moreover, much of the growth in inequality can be explained by demographic factors. Income inequality is usually highest among the older and more highly educated, for the simple reason that by increasing the earning *potential* of an individual (either by giving them a longer period in which to earn or better tools to earn with), the variation in outcomes increases as well. By some economic analyses, a large majority of the observed income inequality is explained by simple demographic effects, the product of an aging (and slightly more educated) population.

On top of this, the rise in income inequality has been largely matched by a rise in the inequality of hours worked. Higher income individuals are simply working more than their lower-earning peers. Part of this may be demographic as well: With the rise of the single-occupant household, there has been a rise in the so-called “threshold earners,” individuals who work as much as they need to satisfy their consumption needs, and then stop.

Don't buy the inequality hype; the American system remains a fair one, and is deserving of continuation.

Finally, it is unclear whether there are any undesirable structural causes for the rise in income of those households that are responsible for most of the increase in income inequality, the top 1 percent of earners. We live in a more global, more connected economy. The creation of new

intellectual property, whether it is a book, or a movie, or a piece of software, is more valuable than it was in earlier times because the number of people who can enjoy it has increased. Rashard Lewis, a 31-year old small forward for the Washington Wizards, has a salary of \$19 million per year, more than three times (adjusted for inflation) than what basketball great Michael Jordan made at the same age. Is Rashard Lewis a better player, or has the productivity of basketball as an entertainment industry increased due to network effects? Are financial executives earning their extra monies by devoting a greater portion of their day to rent seeking, or are their rising incomes the result of making decisions that price the activity of a larger absolute market? Is J.K. Rowling a better of an author than Charles Dickens, or is she merely the recipient of a windfall that the information economy has provided? And should we cap the amount of money that the Mrs. Rowlings of the world earn through their creations even when, by any calculation, the value of those creations are higher today than they were in the past?

Inequality alarmists propose smashing the incentives structure that allows the free market to operate, through monopolization of the labor supply, or taxes that grossly violate the benefits-received principle, or command and control schemes on individual income. They are using statistics whose real story — a tale of demographic and technological trends — is hidden at first glance, and using the obvious (but wrong) inference from those statistics to justify a policy of income redistribution and market meddling. They are motivated not out of concern with the statistics themselves, but by their ideological preferences and partisan allegiances.

Don't buy the inequality hype; the American system remains a fair one, and is deserving of continuation.

What's really driving the Internet freedom movement?

Internet freedom, from Page 4

In addition to the head-scratching phenomenon of seeing the U.S. government promoting free thought and expression in cyberspace in other countries while simultaneously applying restrictions and surveillance on Americans with increasing zeal since 9/11, what Clinton's Internet speech boils down to is money; specifically, how much, and when the government will give it.

Let's admit it, the administration's new policy is not about such lovely things as Internet freedom, democracy, human rights, liberty, and the United States' love and devotion to all the deserving repressed people out there. As the U.S. media's coverage of the speech clearly shows, this is a business story.

Of course, it is no breaking news that American economic and strategic interests, here as in other areas, are the implicit priorities, but let's call a spade a spade. It never hurts to skeptically scratch the surface of these flowery narratives we are being delivered by the ruling elite and its minions — the mainstream media.

Curiously, critics of how government funds have been spent in the past are especially interested in supporting circumvention technologies and services — which enables users to bypass censorship — as opposed to financing other means of provid-

ing online security, such as teaching users how to reinforce the privacy of their e-mail accounts. In fact, judging by media reports, the core of their criticism is that the State Department did not spend the assigned \$30 million specifically on circumvention.

I am no economist, nor a business major; the rules of corporate finance evade me, and my math skills are questionable. But still, it is clear that the lure of certain profits is lying just below the surface of all the concern for the poor people in Syria and Iran deprived of control-free Internet.

There is no doubt that a free, open Internet has done wonders for securing democratic debate and activism.

However, some online control circumventing services have not only proven their crucial role in autocratic countries — such as when they were heavily used by Iranian activists during the 2009 presidential election — but they have also seen soaring demand amid the current revolutionary events in the Middle East and Northern Africa. In just three days, “120,000 people — most of them Egyptian — have downloaded Tor software, which helps activists

protect their identity from surveillance by repressive regimes and get around blocked sites,” said Tor Executive Director Andrew Lewman in remarks reported by *The Boston Globe* on Jan. 30. Tor, one of the major online privacy and anonymity systems on the market, is produced by a non-profit based in Massachusetts, which the *Globe* reports receives about 75 percent of its funding from the U.S. government.

In fact, circumvention software experts and developers have been increasingly busy lately, improving and providing a tool whose value is undeniable in communication-challenged environments. Recent unrest in repressed regions, increased citizens' awareness and activism, and growing evidence of the benefits of digital mobile communications tools and services, from cell phones to online social networks, are certainly combining to contribute to the flurry of activity in circumvention technologies creative circles.

Indeed, as the *Globe* reports about Tor in its Jan. 30 “Foreign activists stay covered online” article, Tor had already laid groundwork in Tunisia by the time the protests started there last December, so Tunisians were able to react when the government began monitoring Facebook and Twitter.

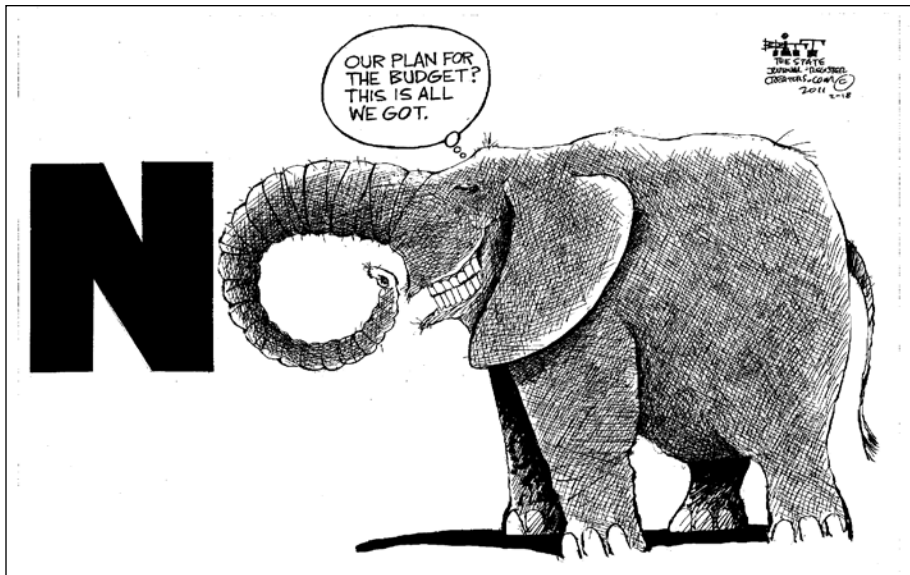
The article also noted, "As protests swelled in Egypt ... so many people rushed to download Tor that one its servers

crashed ...”

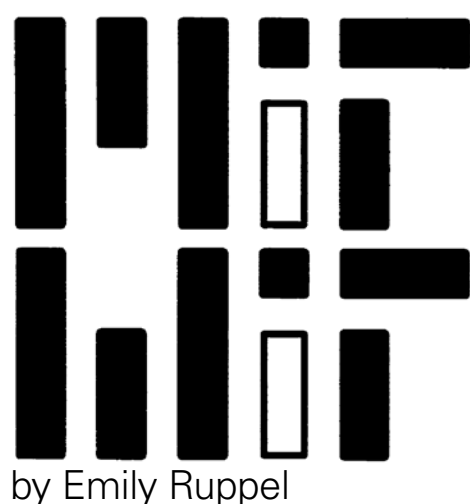
Given the rather sudden (at least to outside observers) eruptions in Tunisia and Egypt, the Tor team certainly shows premonitory talent for sniffing out trouble and cyber repression from miles away, and the need for bypassing them, as well as the ability to provide for that need in advance.

There is no doubt that a free, open Internet has done wonders for securing democratic debate, activism, and other rights in both free and restrictive regions of the world, and Clinton's words on the best recipe for an open society — justice and peace — certainly rings true.

Yet, in addition to this intriguing activity by some Internet access service providers in specific regions, well before the unleashing of key events whose victims virtually depend on the services provided, it is tempting to see the Internet in general as a fiercely guarded territory in prey to sharp-fanged players and their personal interests. But while it is crucial to keep working on reaching those ideals of digital freedom, individual liberty and rights, and tolerance and civility online, to name just a few of the government's proclaimed most cherished values, it is also important to keep our minds open for diverging narratives, unexpected possible scenarios, hidden interests, and our ears receptive to the muffled but sweet sound of dripping dollars in the background.



FUN FUN FUN FUN FUN FUN



I'VE NOTICED YOU'RE FINALLY GETTING AROUND TO MAKING SOME RESOLUTIONS...

...BUT I THINK IT'S CUSTOMARY TO TRY FOR SELF-IMPROVEMENT? I AM!

WITHOUT FAIL, I BREAK ALL MY RESOLUTIONS WITHIN A WEEK OF MAKING THEM. THIS LIST IS FOOL-PROOF!

- DRINK MORE
- ABANDON THESIS
- RESIST URGE TO GET A JOB
- FATTEN UP/MORE PASTRIES

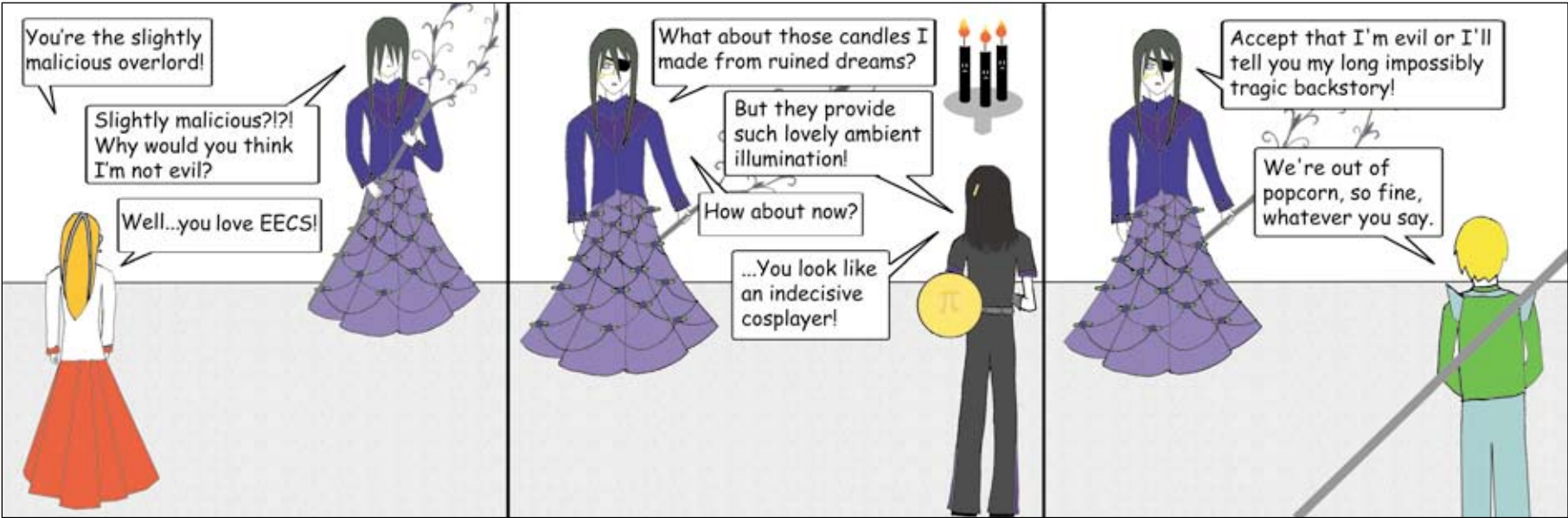
UM. AGREED.

ACROSS

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| 60 | | | | | | | 61 | 62 | | | | | 63 | 64 | 65 |
| 66 | | | | | 67 | | | | | 68 | | | | | |
| 69 | | | | | 70 | | | | | 71 | | | | | |

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| 61 Alternatives | 63 Soviet mil. | 64 Very wide shoe |
| 62 Thus far | intelligence | 65 Letters on Cardinal caps |

Somewhere on the Search for Meaning... by Letitia Li



Sudoku

Solution, page 11

		6	3	1		2		4
1			7					
	3		9	6	8	7		
			8		9			6
				7				
7			6		1			
		2	1	5	7		6	
					6			7
6		7		8	3	9		

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column, row, and 3 by 3 grid contains exactly one of each of the digits 1 through 9.

Techdoku

Solution, page 11

18x	6x		18+		
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	1-			3÷	
2			30x		
21+			6x	1-	12x
		6			

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column and row contains exactly one of each of the numbers 1–6. Follow the mathematical operations for each box.

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File Edit Options Buffers Tools Im-Python Python Help

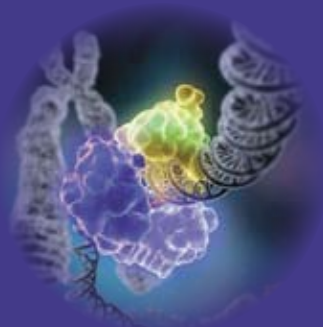
```
from new_skills import *  
  
def learnMarketableJobSkills():  
    return linux, OSX, javascript, applescript, perl, python, PHP  
  
if self.interest == True:  
    print "E-mail join@tech.mit.edu"  
  
-----:-----F1 joinTechno.py (Python)--L1--Top-----
```


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Learning to Change the World

Koch brothers' money fuels Wisconsin union fight

By Eric Lipton
THE NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON — Among the thousands of demonstrators who jammed the Wisconsin State Capitol grounds this weekend was a well-financed advocate from Washington who was there to voice praise for cutting state spending by slashing union benefits and bargaining rights.

The visitor, Tim Phillips, the president of Americans for Prosperity, told counterprotesters in what was otherwise a largely union crowd that the cuts were not only necessary but also represented the start of a much-needed nationwide move to slash public-sector union benefits.

“We are going to bring fiscal sanity back to this great nation,” he said.

What Phillips did not mention was that his Virginia-based nonprofit group, whose budget surged to \$40 million in 2010 from \$7 million three years ago, was created and financed in part by the secretive billionaire brothers Charles G. Koch ’57 and David H. Koch ’62.

State records also show that Koch Industries, their energy and consumer products conglomerate based in Wichita, Kan., was one of the biggest contributors to the election campaign of Gov. Scott Walker of Wisconsin, a Republican who has championed the proposed cuts.

Even before the new governor was sworn in last month, executives from the Koch-backed group had worked behind the scenes to try to encourage a union showdown, Phillips said in an interview Monday.

State governments have gone into the red, he said, in part because of the excessively generous pay and benefits that unions have been able to negotiate for teachers, police, firefighters, and other state and local employees.

“We thought it was important to do,” Phillips said, adding that his group is already working with ac-

tivists and state officials in Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania to urge them to take similar steps to curtail union benefits or give public employees the power to opt out of unions entirely.

To union leaders and liberal activists in Washington, this intervention in Wisconsin is proof of the expanding role played by nonprofit groups with murky ties to wealthy corporate executives as they push a decidedly conservative agenda.

“The Koch brothers are the poster children of the effort by multinational corporate America to try to redefine the rights and values of American citizens,” said Rep. Gwen Moore, D-Wis., who joined with others in the union protests.

A spokesman for Koch Industries, as well as Phillips, scoffed at that accusation. The companies owned by Koch (pronounced Coke) — which include the Georgia-Pacific Corp. and Koch Pipeline Co. — have no direct stake in the union debate, they said. The company has about 3,000 employees in Wisconsin, including workers at a toilet paper factory and gasoline supply terminals. The pending legislation would not directly affect its bottom line.

“A balanced budget will benefit Koch Industries and its thousands of employees in Wisconsin no more and no less than the rest of the state’s private-sector workers and employ-

ers,” said Jeff Schoepke, a Koch Industries lobbyist in Wisconsin. “This is a dispute between public-sector unions and democratically elected officials over how best to serve the public interest.”

Certainly, the Koch brothers have long used their wallets to promote fiscal conservatism and combat regulation, another Koch Industries spokesman said Monday.

But the push to curtail union benefits in Wisconsin has been backed by many conservative groups that have no Koch connection, Phillips noted.

“This is a Wisconsin movement,” said Fred Luber, chief executive of the Supersteel Products Corp. in Milwaukee, who serves on Americans for Prosperity’s Wisconsin state advisory board. “Obviously, Washington is interested in this. But it is up to us to do.”

Political activism is high on the list of priorities for Charles Koch, who in a letter in September to other business leaders and conservatives explained that he saw no other choice.

“If not us, who? If not now, when?” said the letter, which invited other conservatives to a retreat in January in Rancho Mirage, Calif. “It is up to us to combat what is now the greatest assault on American freedom and prosperity in our lifetimes.”

Campaign finance records in

Washington show that donations by Koch Industries and its employees climbed to a total of \$2 million in the last election cycle, twice as much as a decade ago, with 92 percent of that money going to Republicans. Donations in state government races — like in Wisconsin — have also surged in recent years, records show.

But the most aggressive expansion of the Koch brothers’ effort to influence public policy has come through the Americans for Prosperity, which runs both a charitable foundation and a grassroots-activists group. Phillips serves as president of both branches, and David Koch is chairman of the Americans for Prosperity Foundation.

The grassroots-activists wing of the organization has chapters in 32 states, including Wisconsin, and an e-mail list of 1.6 million supporters, said Mary Ellen Burke, a spokeswoman. She would not say how much of last year’s \$40 million budget came from the Koch family, but nationwide donations have come in from 70,000 members, she said, offering it as proof that it has wide support.

The organization has taken up a range of topics, including combating the health care law, environmental regulations and spending by state and federal governments. The effort to impose limits on public labor unions has been a particular focus

in Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, all states with Republican governors, Phillips said, adding that he expects new proposals to emerge soon in some of those states to limit union power.

To Bob Edgar, a former House Democrat who is now president of Common Cause, a liberal group that has been critical of what it sees as the rising influence of corporate interests in U.S. politics, the Koch brothers are using their money to create a facade of grassroots support for their favorite causes.

“This is a dangerous moment in America history,” Edgar said. “It is not that these folks don’t have a right to participate in politics. But they are moving democracy into the control of more wealthy corporate hands.”

But Phillips and members of his group and other conservative activists, not surprisingly, see it very differently. Just like unions organize to fight for their priorities, conservatives are entitled to a voice of their own.

“This is a watershed moment in Wisconsin,” Phillips said. “For the last two decades, government unions have used their power to drive pensions and benefits and salaries well beyond anything that can be sustained. We are just trying to change that.”

Steven Greenhouse contributed reporting from Madison, Wis.

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Solution to Crossword

from page 6

A	L	S	A	C	E		C	L	U	J		H	R	A
R	E	A	R	M	S		R	A	T	E		E	O	S
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O	N	D	E	C	K		H	U	L	A				
C	O	R	D	U	R	O	Y	S	R	I	D	G	E	S
I	N	E		S	I	R	E		I	M	A	R	E	T
S	E	S		P	S	S	T		S	A	M	U	E	L

Solution to Sudoku

from page 7

8	7	6	3	1	5	2	9	4
1	9	5	7	2	4	6	3	8
2	3	4	9	6	8	7	1	5
5	2	1	8	4	9	3	7	6
3	6	8	5	7	2	1	4	9
7	4	9	6	3	1	5	8	2
9	8	2	1	5	7	4	6	3
4	1	3	2	9	6	8	5	7
6	5	7	4	8	3	9	2	1

Solution to Techdoku

from page 7

1	2	3	5	4	6
6	1	2	4	3	5
3	4	5	1	6	2
2	3	4	6	5	1
5	6	1	3	2	4
4	5	6	2	1	3

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Lobby 7 competition focuses on ‘mens et manus’

Lobby 7, Page 1

who said that two alumni, Harvey I. Steinberg '54 and Joseph P. Blake '54, approached him with the idea for the competition after reading his book *Designing MIT: Bosworth's New Tech*, which discusses the history of the plinths. With MIT's 150th anniversary coming up in April, the alumni felt that now was the perfect opportunity for students to represent the Institute in a manner outside of their specialized interests. "The purpose was to see what kinds of ideas today's students would have regarding what could or should be placed on the plinths," said Blake.

Open to all MIT students and sponsored by the Class of 1954, the design competition is less an exercise in functional design than one in conceptual design; there is no guarantee that one of the winning designs will be built, as that final decision is made by the President's office. The intent of the competition is not to produce a functional space-filler, but rather to elicit thought and innovation from students. Jarzombek said that not all of the finalist's entries could be functionally implemented, but they were selected since they represent the essence of MIT. The only "rule" of the competition is to submit a design in the spirit of MIT's official creed: mens et manus.

The winning entries will be displayed at the Elliot K. Wolk Gallery in Building 7 from April 15 to May 15 in an exhibition hosted by the MIT Museum. The final winners, in both the graduate and undergraduate groups, will be formally announced on April 15 at a ceremony that will be part of the MIT 150 celebration.



ARCHIMEDES PHOTO COURTESY OF NATIONAL MUSEUM IN NAPLES, ICTINUS PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY IN LONDON

The Lobby 7 plinths were designed for statues of Greek intellectuals, but 12 finalists have designed their own, uniquely MIT adornments.



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Grand Junction changes on the horizon



JASWANTH MADHAVAN

The Grand Junction Railroad may become a commuter rail link between Boston’s North Station and Worcester. The Massachusetts Department of Transportation has purchased the rights to the rail line, which runs past Simmons Hall and over Massachusetts Avenue, and is investigating the possibility of upgrading the tracks for commuter rail use. If realized, a commuter rail line along Grand Junction could mean that as many as 25 trains per day will travel the tracks, a marked increase over the light freight use it experiences today. The Cambridge City Council has come out against commuter rail, citing a potential impact on already-congested Cambridge streets, noise pollution, and the lack of any apparent benefits of commuter rail for Cambridge communities. MassDOT says that linking Worcester and North Station will strengthen the regional economy. The tracks run directly under Building 46, MIT’s Brain and Cognitive Sciences complex.

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Google trying to avoid antitrust fight in Europe

By James Kanter
THE NEW YORK TIMES

BRUSSELS — At the annual World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, the hottest ticket in recent years has invariably been an invitation to Google’s lavish private party, and 2011 was no exception. Eric E. Schmidt, soon to leave the post of chief executive, was avidly working the crowd amid free-flowing liquor and pulsating dance music. But in recent months, Google has been attracting a different kind of attention. As its ambitions have grown, stretching into businesses far beyond Internet search and advertising by the click, so has the scrutiny of antitrust agencies on both sides of the Atlantic. So Google extended an even

more exclusive invitation to another Davos attendee, Joaquin Almunia, the EU antitrust chief, asking him to meet face-to-face with Schmidt. On the agenda: the investigation Almunia’s team had just begun into allegations from European companies that Google had abused its dominance in online search — by giving preferential placement to its own services and unfavorable treatment to those of competitors. At the meeting, Schmidt asked Almunia to complete the inquiry as quickly as possible. And if the investigation turned up problems, Schmidt requested that Google be given a chance to offer solutions without incurring penalties, according to people with direct knowledge of their conversation. Almunia told Schmidt he would try to do so, according to these people, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of antitrust investigations. The details of the investigation are not public, and Google has not disclosed its responses to the European Commission. A Google spokesman, Al Verney, said recently that “there’s always going to be room for improvement” and that Google would “continue to work closely with” European regulators to address any concerns. But antitrust investigations in the United States are piling up, including a Texas inquiry involving Google’s search dominance and federal scrutiny of Google’s proposed acquisition of ITA Software, a flight information company. And with complaints growing louder on issues like privacy, the last thing Google wants is to get bogged down

in a lengthy antitrust battle in Brussels. The case could also be costly for Google, and not just in tarnishing its “Don’t be evil” motto. If found in violation of European law, Google could be fined as much as 10 percent of its annual worldwide revenue, which topped \$29 billion last year. It could also be required to adjust its business model as part of a remedy. Google has some reason to be hopeful. Almunia is portrayed by those who know him as more of a consensus-seeker than his immediate predecessors, who imposed huge fines on Microsoft and, in a separate case, the chip giant Intel, a ruling Intel is still appealing. And the commission was wary of rushing into another high-stakes battle with another U.S. corporate powerhouse. But its members could not ignore the clamoring — from struggling startups, major newspaper publishers and telecommunications companies, among others — for them to look into Google’s ever-expanding operations. On Nov. 30, Almunia’s office issued a news release saying it had opened a formal investigation of the company. Despite Google’s market share in Internet searches of more than 90 percent in parts of Europe, the evidence in hand was limited. The commission’s case team had formal complaints from only three companies, and each was a minnow in the technology world. In addition, the commission’s old antagonist, Microsoft, was among those pushing hardest for an investigation; two of the three complainants had ties — one directly, the other indirectly — to the company. Yet during the course of 2010, the case team received signals that if a formal investigation were started and official questionnaires sent industry-wide, they would get plenty more evidence. During the preliminary inquiries, Google’s own actions were perceived in Brussels as naive, according to one senior EU official with direct knowledge of the investigation. There were also apparent inconsistencies between Google’s public and private statements regarding practices like “whitelisting,” or adjusting the results of Google’s algorithms to favor certain sites in search results.

Almunia is portrayed as more of a consensus-seeker than his predecessors.

That issue has relevance in the United States as well. In an antitrust investigation that strikes at the heart of Google’s search business, investigators in Texas are seeking evidence about the “manual overriding or altering of” search result rankings. That inquiry involves at least one of the websites in the European investigation, a British price-comparison service called Foundem. The specifics of antitrust cases are typically kept private by regulators and the companies being investigated, but, unusually, Google chose in February 2010 to publicize which companies had filed complaints. They were Foundem; Ciao, another price-comparison site in Germany; and Ejustice.fr, a French legal advice site. Google highlighted the fact that Ciao was owned by Microsoft and

Google, Page 15

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Time: 11am - 3pm

Google, from Page 14

that Foundem had ties to a Micro-soft-financed lobbying group in Brussels.

The company’s decision, however, was seen as “defensive and naive,” said one senior commission official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Officials also saw Google’s early responses as inadequate in addressing their central concern: whether Google had shut out competition. The filings in the case, some of which were made available to *The New York Times*, showed that Google frequently dwelt on what it saw as its prerogative to preserve the quality of its own service for consumers.

“Suggesting that Google is under an obligation to show search results of other search services is like suggesting that Mercedes is under an obligation to put Fiat motors in its cars,” the company’s lawyers wrote to the commission in a confidential response on May 3.

That was in response to charges by Ejustice.fr. that Google had removed most of its pages from an online index. As a result, Ejustice said, clicks on its site dropped so sharply that it was effectively invisible on the Web.

Google said in its response that Ejustice.fr was violating guidelines set by Google about how to make the website findable in Google’s search engine. Google said that violation could result in users never finding a Web page with the answer to their question, just more pages of search results.

Google also said Ejustice.fr created pages with thousands of hyperlinks consisting only of search keywords, many with little or nothing to do with the law. “This is typical behavior of sites that seek artificially to increase their search result ranking without offering authentic content,” Google lawyers wrote.

At the same time, Google acknowledged that it had probably also removed some potentially useful Ejustice legal search terms.

A complaint by Adam and Shivaun Raff, the husband-and-wife team behind Foundem, was pivotal.

Foundem was a highly regarded price-comparison site in Britain. But for some time, the Raffs said, their site had become virtually invisible on Google’s search results, and in July 2009, the couple headed for Brussels to complain.

They contended that their site had been penalized by Google, starting in June 2006, even though its ranking remained competitive on other search engines like Bing and Yahoo.

They said that Google had then made it prohibitively expensive for them to make their site easier to find in a different way — through paid advertising that appears next to Google’s search results. And they made a third charge: that Google’s algorithms had the effect of favoring Google’s own price-comparison tool, originally called Froogle and since renamed Google Product Search.

Eventually the Raffs submitted a formal complaint, backed by written material that seemed at odds with some of Google’s public statements.

For example, Julia Holtz, Google’s chief lawyer in Europe, told reporters in February 2010 that “we don’t whitelist or blacklist” other websites.

Yet the company apparently has used whitelisting, at least in certain areas. One message to the Raffs from Google in September 2007, which focused on returning Foundem’s paid advertising rates to normal, was labeled “Update on Whitelisting.” Two weeks later, Google informed Foundem that it had successfully “facilitated a change” and remedied the problem.

But Foundem was still not satisfied with its search ranking, and the Raffs persisted.

By autumn 2009, Matt Cutts, the head of Google’s webspam team, which works on search quality, had begun a detailed dialogue with Foundem. Cutts advised Shivaun Raff in an e-mail dated Nov. 20, 2009, to do more to clean up garble on the site, and then “we should see some positive changes to Foundem’s relative ranking.” Cutts insisted that there was “no manual penalty affecting the ranking of Foundem pages.”

In its May 3 filing, Google said it had given Foundem “the benefit of the doubt and removed the demotion” after Foundem had fixed “the most egregious quality deficiencies.”

Foundem has produced color diagrams it says proves that Google favors its own services.

Foundem, however, charges that Google’s remedy took too long — three and a half years — and that the process was too difficult.

Foundem also charges that Google uses other algorithms to favor its own services, and it has produced color diagrams it says proves that point. Google did not respond to questions seeking specific comment on Foundem’s allegations.

Google, however, is accustomed to dealing with complaints about search placement. Last November, Google wrote on its European Public Policy Blog that its goal was serving users with “the best, most relevant” information, adding that “not every Web site can come out on top, or even appear on the first page of our results, so there will almost always be Web site owners who are unhappy about their rankings.”

A few days before the commission formally opened its case, Almunia telephoned David C. Drummond, Google’s chief lawyer, to alert him of the investigation. Drummond expressed his disappointment, but there were no attempts at negotiating by either party, according to people with knowledge of their conversation.

Asked about the Davos meeting between Schmidt and Mr. Almunia, Verney, the Google spokesman, said, “We frequently talk to regulators as a normal part of any investigation process.”

Amelia Torres, a spokeswoman for Almunia, said that the antitrust chief was “happy with Google’s cooperation.”

If the past is an indicator, the case will be alive for some time. The cases involving Microsoft and Intel lasted, through various stages, for about a decade.

Paul Geitner contributed reporting from Davos, Switzerland, and Claire Cain Miller contributed from San Francisco.

Swimming and Diving wins NEWMAC Championships



JESSICA L. WASS—THE TECH

This weekend, MIT Women’s Swimming and Diving won the NEWMAC Championships for the first time in school history. After consistently taking second place, the Engineers beat rivals Springfield College 917.5 points to 894.5. The seniors of the team (from left to right), Diana E. LaScala-Gruenewald ’11, Elizabeth L. Stavely ’11 (partially obscured), Amy E. Jacobi ’11, Kaitlyn M. Creasey ’11, Caroline A. DeBoer ’11, and Lauren R. Hernley ’11, claim the first place trophy.

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Williams sneaks Track win

MIT women rival Williams for Indoor trophy

By Laura Stilwell
TEAM REPRESENTATIVE

MIT Women's Track and Field once again demonstrated their characteristic competitiveness and tenacity as they competed in the New England Division III Indoor Championships held here at MIT over the weekend. Although rival Williams College was favored to win the event, the Engineers refused to allow Williams to simply walk into their house and take the title without an impressive fight.

While there were over 20 teams racing on the Shobrys and Aronson Track this weekend, the competition quickly turned into a dual meet between MIT and Williams, and remained so until the very end. Going into the last two events — the 4x400-meter relay and the 4x800 relay — MIT trailed Williams by 9 points. With relentless determination, the women mixed up the relay entries in an effort to maximize their chances of scoring crucial points. Kirsten H. Aarsvold '11 and Megan E. Bumgarner '14 were called upon to race in the 4x400 relay, while Hazel L. Briner '11 and Jamie L. Simmons '12 were placed in the 4x800 relay. Along with Portia M. Jones '12 and Martha M. Gross '12, Aarsvold and Bumgarner helped the 4x400 relay team take second place, putting them within 6 points of Williams. The 4x800 relay, consisting of Briner, Simmons, Olivia J. Papa '14, and Louise E. van den Heuvel '14, ran an impressive time of 9 minutes, 33.42 seconds, scoring second place and beating the Williams squad. However, the Engineers' inspiring comeback effort fell just short. Williams was still able to claim the championship, scoring only four points more than MIT.

The women gave spectacular efforts throughout the entire competition, but "it required a near perfect meet to win and we just could not quite pull it off," Head Coach Halston W. Taylor commented. The women started off strong on Friday afternoon with the indoor pentathlon, as Jaclyn A. Konopka '14 went from unseeded in the competition to scoring an unexpected third for the Engineers. Tech began the competition on Saturday with an equally impressive effort, as the

distance medley relay team of Aarsvold, Papa, Andrea D. Nickerson '14, and Anna M. Holt-Gosselin '11 were able to take first. Holt-Gosselin also captured another win in the 3000, running an outstanding personal record of 10:08.37, while Martina A. de Geus '14 placed sixth in the event with a time of 10:15.29.

MIT also earned wins in the 4x200 relay, 200, and pole vault. The 4x200 relay team, consisting of Jacqueline A. Brew '14, Jones, Gross, and Simmons, moved up from their third seed to take the event. Jones added on to this first place finish a second place in the 400 and a win in the 200 with a time of 25.43, setting a new program record. With these marks, along with her contribution to the second place finish by the 4x400 relay squad, Jones proved once again why she deserves the title of All-American.

The women's pole vault remained consistent in their excellent performances this season by sweeping the event and accruing 24 points for MIT. Karin E. Fisher '11 took the event with a vault of 3.80 meters, extending her record to five out of six first place finishes for the year. Briner placed second, and Lauren B. Kuntz '13 placed third with a personal record of 3.65.

With these marks, Jones proved once again why she deserves the title of All-American.

Along with her outstanding contribution to the 4x200 relay win, Brew captured third place in the long jump, fifth in the 55 hurdles, and eighth in the triple jump. Amy R. Magnuson G earned third in the 55 hurdles, followed by Briner, as she once again demonstrated the depth of her talent, scoring over 20 points for the Engineers.

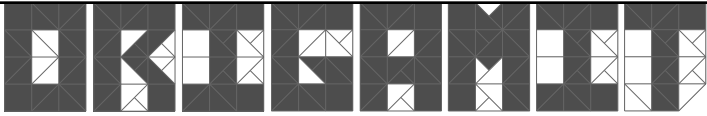
Coach Taylor was "very proud of everyone's effort," and is looking forward to the Outdoor Track and Field season, in which the women hope to defend their NEWMAC Outdoor Championship title. The Indoor season, however, is far from over. The women will continue with the NEICAAA Championship this upcoming weekend at Boston University.

UPCOMING HOME EVENTS

Thursday, February 24

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